Mr. Speaker, I am

committed to the war against terrorism and believe that stopping Saddam Hussein from developing weapons

of mass destruction is a necessary part

of that effort. But at this time, however, I believe it is premature to authorize a unilateral attack on Iraq.

Working with the international community is the surest means of addressing this threat effectively, sharing

costs and resources and ensuring stability in Iraq and throughout the Middle East in the event of a regime

change. While the President has spoken

of the value of a coalition effort, the

resolution before the House today undermines the importance of our allies

and of maintaining the momentum of

international cooperation in the wider war on terrorism.

I support the Spratt amendment to

this resolution. This amendment would

authorize the use of U.S. forces in support of a new U.N. Security Council

resolution mandating the elimination,

by force, if necessary, of all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and means of

producing such weapons. Should the

Security Council fail to produce such a

resolution, the amendment calls on the

President then to seek authorization

for unilateral military action. In this

way, the amendment emphasizes our

preference for a peaceful solution and

coalition support, while recognizing

that military force and unilateral action may be appropriate at some point.

We should not rush into war without

the support of our allies. We should not

send American troops into combat before making a full-faith effort to put

U.N. inspectors back into Iraq under a

more forceful resolution. We should not

turn to a policy of preemptive attack,

which we have so long and so rightly

condemned, without first providing a

limited-time option for peaceful resolution of the threat.

America has long stood behind the

principles of exhausting diplomacy before resorting to war; and, at times

like this, we must lead by example.